STUDENTS

Tardiness, Absence and Truancy

Grades K-12

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. Upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year, the district shall inform students and their parents/guardians of this expectation, the benefits of regular school attendance, the consequences of truancy, the role and responsibility of the district in regard to truancy, and resources available to assist the student and their parents and guardians in correcting truancy. The district will also make this information available online and will take reasonable steps to ensure parents can request and be provided such information in languages in which they are fluent.

Excused Absence – Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. Teachers will keep a record of absences and tardiness. The school principal (or designee) has the authority to determine if an absence meets the criteria for an excused absence.

The following are valid excuses for daily absences from school K-12:

1. Participation in a District- or school- approved activity or instructional program; this absence must be authorized by a staff member; and the affected teacher(s) must be notified prior to the absence, unless it is clearly impossible to do so;
2. Illness, health condition or medical appointment (including but not limited to medical, counseling, pregnancy or pregnancy-related, dental or optometry);
3. Family emergency, including but not limited to a death or illness in the family;
4. Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction for up to two days per school year provided such is not conducted on school property;
5. Court, judicial proceeding or serving on a jury;
6. Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
7. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055;
8. Absence directly related to the student’s homeless status;
9. Absence resulting from a disciplinary/corrective action. (e.g., short-term or long-term suspension, emergency expulsion); and
10. Principal (or designee) and parent, guardian, or emancipated youth mutually agreed upon approved activity. An absence may not be approved if it causes a serious adverse effect on the student’s educational progress. In certain classes the student may not be able to achieve the objectives of the unit of instruction as a result of absence from class. In such a case, a parent-approved absence would have an adverse effect on the student’s educational progress which would ultimately be reflected in the grade for such a course.

The school principal (or designee) has the authority to determine if an absence meets the above criteria for an excused absence.

The following individuals may provide notification of an excused absence:

1. Parent/guardian of the student;
2. Adult students (those over 18 years of age);
3. Emancipated students (those over 16 years of age who have been emancipated by court action);
4. Students 14 years of age or older who are absent from school due to testing for treatment for sexually transmitted disease;
5. Students 13 years of age or older who are absent for mental health, drug or alcohol treatment; or
6. Any students who are absent for family planning.

In all cases it is expected that the appropriate individual will notify the school office on the morning of the absence by phone, e-mail, written note, or through the school’s online system. If no excuse is provided with the notification, the appropriate individual must submit an excuse, at the latest, within 48 hours of the student’s return to school in order for the absence to be excused.

Absence Resulting from Disciplinary Action

As required by law, students who are removed from a class or classes as a disciplinary measure or students who have been placed on short-term suspension will have the right to make up assignments or exams missed during the time they were denied entry to the classroom if the effect of the missed assignments will be a substantial lowering of the course grade.

Extended Illness or Health Condition

If a student is confined to home or hospital for an extended period, the school will arrange for the accomplishment of assignments at the place of confinement whenever practical. If the student is unable to do his/her schoolwork, or if there are major requirements of a particular course which cannot be accomplished outside of class the student may be required to take an incomplete or withdraw from the class without penalty.

Excused Absence for Chronic Health Condition

Students with a chronic health condition which interrupts regular attendance may qualify for placement in a limited attendance and participation program. The student and his/her parent will apply to the principal or counselor, and a limited program will be written following the advice and recommendations of the student's medical advisor. The recommended limited program will be approved by the principal. Staff will be informed of the student's needs, though the confidentiality of medical information will be respected at the parent's request.

Tardiness

Students are expected to be in class and arrive at school on time. When a student's tardiness becomes frequent or disruptive, such behavior will be addressed by school staff and administration through building attendance procedures.

Absence

An absence means that a student has failed to attend the majority of hours or periods in an average school day or has missed more than 10 minutes of a class or period.

Unexcused Absences

Absences will be considered unexcused when:

1. The parent, guardian or adult student submits an excuse that does not meet the definition of an excused absence as defined above (e.g. an absence due to shopping, getting a haircut,
oversleeping); or

2. The parent, guardian, or adult student fails to submit any type of excuse statement, whether by phone, e-mail, through the school’s online system or in writing, for an absence.

Each unexcused absence within any month of the current school year will be followed by a letter or phone call to the parent informing them of the consequences of additional unexcused absences. The school will make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language in which that parent is fluent. A student's grade will not be affected if no graded activity is missed during such an absence.

After two unexcused absences within any month of the current school year, following reasonable efforts on the part of parents and school staff to excuse absences, a conference will occur between the principal/designee, student and parent to identify the causes of the student's absenteeism. If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference is scheduled to take place within thirty days of the second unexcused absence, the district may address attendance at that time.

If the student’s parent/guardian does not attend the conference, the conference may be conducted with the student and school official. However, the parent will be notified of the steps taken to eliminate or reduce the student’s absences.

Not later than a student’s fifth unexcused absence in a month, the district will:

a. Designate a staff member to administer the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) if the student is between the ages of 13-17 and is reading at a minimum fifth grade level;

b. Where appropriate, provide the student with best practice or research-based interventions informed by WARNS, if given;

c. Enter into an agreement with the student and parents/guardians that establishes school attendance requirements;

If the student does not demonstrate improved attendance, following the steps outlined above, the District will:

d. Refer the student to a community truancy board; or

e. File a petition to juvenile court (see below).

A WARNS assessment must be administered prior to referral to the Community Truancy Board or filing a petition to juvenile court. For students who are not 13-17 years of age or are not reading at a minimum fifth grade level, the student best practices or research-based interventions based must still be implemented prior to referral to the Community Truancy Board or filing a petition with juvenile court.

Not later than a student’s seventh unexcused absence within any month during the current school year, or a tenth unexcused absence during the current school year, if the district’s attempts to substantially reduce a student’s absences have not been successful and if the student is under the age of seventeen, the district will file a petition and supporting affidavit for a civil action in juvenile court containing all required information, facts and documentation.

Petitions may be served to the student or his/her family by certified mail, return receipt requested, but if such service is unsuccessful, personal service is required. The District be represented by a person who is not an attorney at hearings related to truancy petitions.

All sanctions imposed for failure to comply with the attendance policies and procedures will be implemented in conformance with state and district regulations regarding discipline or corrective action.
Community Truancy Board

A community truancy board means a board established pursuant to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between a juvenile court and the school district and composed of members of the local community in which the student attends school.

The district will designate and identify to the juvenile court a staff member to coordinate district efforts to address excessive absenteeism and truancy, including outreach and conferences, coordinating the MOU, establishing protocols and procedures with the court, coordinating trainings, sharing evidence-based and culturally appropriate practices. The district will also identify a person within each school to serve as a contact regarding excessive absenteeism and truancy.

Transfers

In the case of a student who transfers from one district to another during the school year, the sending district will provide to the receiving district, together with a copy of the WARNS assessment and any interventions previously provided to the student, the most recent truancy information for that student. The information will include the online or written acknowledgment by the parent and student.

Alternative high school programs follow the legal guidelines for alternative education. (Policy No. 2245)

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